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ABSTRACT

Although Eleanor Roosevelt's career as a magazine journalist has been all but forgotten, it was an important part of her public activity while she was First Lady from 1933 to 1945. In contrast to ideas then current, Mrs. Roosevelt insisted on her right to earn money from her magazine work while in the White House. There is also evidence that her magazine career was based more on her status than on the substance of her output. An analysis of the more than 60 articles she placed in general-interest magazines with national circulation was based on two criteria: (1) the degree to which they served as political propaganda for the administration of her husband, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and (2) the kind of advice and guidance they offered American women as they sought to cope with social change. Her articles contained an important political dimension either through obvious partisan advocacy or by humanizing her husband's administration through use of human interest material. Her advice to women was conservative by today's standards--chiefly to define themselves in terms of their families. Yet she served as a liberating force for women by upholding the right of married women to engage in paid work and by popularizing the right of women to speak out on current issues, in contrast to the previous ideology that upper class women should remain apart from public life. (Author/CRH)

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Eleanor Roosevelt: First Lady as Magazine Journalist

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ABSTRACT

Eleanor Roosevelt: First Lady as Magazine Journalist

Although Eleanor Roosevelt's career as a magazine journalist has been all but forgotten, it was an important part of her public activity while she was First Lady from 1933 to 1945. This paper represents an initial attempt to describe her articles, which numbered more than 60 in general interest magazines with national circulation during this period. The analysis is based on two criteria: (1) the degree the articles served as political propaganda for the administration of her husband, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and (2) the kind of advice and guidance they offered American women as they sought to cope with social change. Mrs. Roosevelt's insistence on her right to earn money from her magazine work while in the White House also is examined.

The contention is that Eleanor Roosevelt's magazine career was based more on her status than on the substance of her output. It concludes that her articles contained an important political dimension either through obvious partisan advocacy or by humanizing her husband's administration

through use of human interest material. It points out that her advice to women was conservative by today's standards - chiefly to define themselves in terms of their families. Yet the paper argues she served as a liberating force for women by (1) upholding the right of married women to engage in paid work and (2) popularizing the right of women to speak out on current issues in contrast to the previous ideology that upper-class women should remain apart from public life.

Eleanor Roosevelt: First Lady as Magazine Journalist

The year 1984 marks the centennial observance of the birth of Anna Eleanor Roosevelt, chiefly remembered as a humanitarian who worked for social betterment while serving as First Lady during the Depression and World War II. What has tended to be forgotten is that Mrs. Roosevelt also pursued a paid career during her White House years from 1933 until 1945. As a career woman, she embraced a variety of fields, acting as a professional lecturer, radio commentator, newspaper columnist and author of books. One of her most extensive vocations, however, was as a magazine journalist.

As First Lady, Mrs. Roosevelt provided a never-ending source of news copy for journalists eager to capitalize on reader interest in a President's wife. But she refused to be presented to the public solely through the eyes and ears of others. Eleanor Roosevelt energetically sought her own opportunities to communicate directly with the nation. Even before she moved to the White House, Mrs. Roosevelt had begun to write for national magazines, predominantly those aimed at women. Her output expanded greatly after she became First Lady, making her a frequent contributor

to well-known publications. Yet, to date her magazine articles have received little attention from scholars.

This is an initial attempt to describe these articles and to analyze their contents, based on two criteria: (1) To what degree the articles served as political propaganda for the administration of her husband, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and (2) to what degree they attempted to offer American women nontraditional advise and guidance as they sought to cope with changes stemming first from economic hardship, and second, from international conflict. Eleanor Roosevelt's motivations for becoming a magazine journalist also will be examined.

It is difficult to separate Mrs. Roosevelt's magazine writing career from either her other journalistic activities or her devotion to a multitude of social causes. Nevertheless, the extent of her contributions to magazines of general interest during her 12 years in the White House makes it important to isolate this aspect of her career. According to the Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, Mrs. Roosevelt wrote a total of 64 articles in magazines with national circulations in this period, not counting her monthly columns answering questions from readers or the serialization of her popular autobiography.[1/] This gave

her an average of nearly six articles a year in national magazines while she was First Lady. In addition, she wrote for partisan publications and magazines less prestigious than those listed in the Reader's Guide.

A special kind of personal journalism marked Mrs. Roosevelt's magazine career, one in which she undertook to speak both for herself and for other women. She repeatedly made use of the highly dramatic facts of her own life, referring to them in articles as well as her autobiography.[2/] The orphaned niece of President Theodore Roosevelt, she grew up living with her grandmother in a gloomy Victorian mansion in New York.

Considered an ugly duckling in a family known for its beautiful women, Eleanor Roosevelt was sent to boarding school in England during her adolescence. Upon her return she surprised her family and friends by becoming engaged to her dashing cousin, Franklin D. Roosevelt, over the objections of his domineering mother, Sara Delano Roosevelt. The couple was married in 1905 when the bride was 20 years old. For the next 15 years Eleanor Roosevelt devoted herself to domestic pursuits, bearing six children, one of whom died in infancy. Although she had begun to be active in the League of Women Voters before her husband was stricken with

polio in 1921, Eleanor Roosevelt did not become a public figure until after his illness. Then, she involved herself in Democratic party politics, keeping his name alive.

During this period Mrs. Roosevelt made her start as a magazine journalist. Her first by-line in a national publication appeared in the Ladies' Home Journal in 1923 on an article titled "American Peace Award."[3] This piece announced details of a competition sponsored by Edward W. Bok, former editor of the Ladies' Home Journal, who offered $100,000 to the United States citizen who submitted the best plan for United States co-operation in obtaining world peace. On the basis of her activities in the League of Women Voters, Mrs. Roosevelt had been asked to work with two other League members in running the contest.

In her start as a journalist, Mrs. Roosevelt received tutelage from Louis M. Howe, a former newspaperman who was her husband's chief political advisor. Initial efforts included partisan pieces, such as "Why I Am a Democrat," which was paired with a similar piece by a Republican woman and run in the Junior League Bulletin in 1923.[4] Her strong support for Gov. Alfred E. Smith, the Democratic presidential

candidate in 1928, provided the theme for three articles written for national magazines in 1927 and 1928: "Why Democrats Favor Smith," "Jeffersonian Principles the Issue in 1928," and "Gov. Smith and Our Foreign Policy."[5] Under Howe's guidance she became editor of a monthly magazine, the Democratic News, aimed at women Democrats.[6]

Although Smith was defeated, Franklin D. Roosevelt scored one of the nation's most notable political comebacks, winning the New York governorship in spite of being unable to work without assistance. Conventional behavior for a governor's wife called for Mrs. Roosevelt to relinquish her own activities to preside over the governor's mansion. But she refused to surrender her career interests, continuing to teach at a private school for girls in New York City as well as expanding her horizons as a journalist. From January, 1929, through June, 1932, at least 12 articles by Mrs. Roosevelt ran in various types of magazines ranging from mass circulation weeklies to obscure monthlies for housewives. In these articles she broadened her subject matter beyond the issue of woman's involvement in politics, and raised fundamental questions of women's status in society.

Mrs. Roosevelt did not question the conventional

wisdom that a woman's chief fulfullment in life lay in being a subordinate wife and mother. One article in the Pictorial Review, titled "Tests of a Successful Wife: Ten Rules for Success in Marriage," told women, "You may count your marriage a success as far as your husband is concerned if you feel that you are useful to him in whatever is the most engrossing interest of his life."[7] The comment seems particularly poignant today since it is now known that the Roosevelts' own marriage had faltered in the World War I era after her discovery of her husband's unfaithfulness, with the couple deciding to remain married in name only for the sake of their children and Franklin Roosevelt's political career.[8] Although a present-day reader might charge Eleanor Roosevelt with hyprocrisy in offering guidance to others, a careful reading finds ideas not totally inconsistent with the Roosevelt's own relationship. In the Pictorial Review piece, she told women that if a husband counted on his wife "as one of the essential contributors to his success then you have succeeded in establishing a real companionship."[9] Who could say this did not describe her own unusual martial partnership, even though readers had no inkling of its unconventional aspects?

Undoubtedly Mrs. Roosevelt's journalistic ventures succeeded mainly because of the value of her name. Even with this asset, her work did not find universal acceptance. Collier's one of the largest mass-circulation magazines, rejected a piece in which she outlined a code of ethics for parents, calling for them to "stop preaching" and concluding with the sweeping generalization, 'the next generation will take care of itself."[10] Years later, her eldest son, James called her recommendation for hands-off childrearing all she "dared to suggest," since the Roosevelt children had been brought up mainly by servants.[11] Collier's turned the piece down, not on grounds of impracticality, but because it was poorly written. An editor who tried unsuccessfully to rewrite it called it "one of the articles which has us defeated."[12]

Also rejected was a 1929 manuscript sent to Vogue in which she endeavored to describe the plight of the middle-aged woman whose life is empty because her children no longer are dependent. It began with a vignette introducing a woman named Sally who gazed into a fire and saw herself as a "rather ugly little girl" facing the "cold glance" of her beautiful mother.[13] The vignette, a thinly veiled reference to the early years of her own life, had little to

do with the point of the article. But it provided an early example of Mrs. Roosevelt's use of autobiographical material which she mined again and again in nonfiction.

Acting as a self-appointed spokesperson for American women, Mrs. Rosoevelt stressed her personal ideas on women's political involvement. In a Home magazine article titled, "What Do Ten Million Women Want?" Mrs. Roosevelt said that women did not want a woman president.[14] This piece appeared nine months before her husband's election as President of the United States in November, 1932. Writing in the first person as she always did, Mrs. Roosevelt declared, "...most of us know that we are not ready to take the great responsibility of the highest places of power."[15] Yet she noted, "There are many women, I think, who feel that the time has come for a woman to fill a place in the Cabinet," adding "perhaps the best place to begin with would be the Department of Labor."[16] Thus she hinted broadly at what was to come -- Franklin D. Roosevelt's appointment of Frances A. Perkins as Secretary of Labor, which made her the first woman to hold a Cabinet post in American history. In her autobiography Mrs. Roosevelt denied responsibility for Perkins' Cabinet appointment, declaring, "I never even suggested her."[17] Still Mrs.

Roosevelt's introduction of the subject in a magazine article served as a trial balloon to test public reaction to the idea.

The Home article outlined areas Mrs. Roosevelt considered of special concern to women: Education, Prohibition, then still on the books, uniform marriage and divorce laws, and curtailment of crime partly through the employment of women police officers, although she contended, "women would not want a woman at the head of the police department."[18] Mrs. Roosevelt linked all of the issues presented to women's role within the home as guardian of children. Consequently even while calling for women to be more active in politics, she glorified their roles as housewives.

This appeared inconsistent with Mrs. Roosevelt's own desire for a money-making career apart from her position as the wife of leading political figure.[19] Although her oldest son, James, indignantly told her he "wouldn't write for such a magazine", she turned out a piece on women and politics for Redbook, known chiefly for light fiction.[20] In spite of ridicule, she contracted to edit Babies - Just Babies, a product of Bernard MacFadden's pulp magazine empire.[21] The arrangement

allowed her to put her daughter, Anna, on the payroll as an assistant when she needed a job after separating from her first husband. When Franklin Roosevelt was elected President, Mrs. Roosevelt told reporters she intended to keep on with MacFadden, although once in the White House she exercised her option to withdraw as editor. Presumably because of her political position, as editor Mrs. Roosevelt declined to make the magazine a forum for serious discussion instead of a collection of appealing baby pictures and light pieces on child care. When the emotion-laden topics of illegitimacy and birth control were suggested to her in a memo, she firmly penciled "no" next to"birth control,"and placed a question mark by "illegitimacy."[22/] Without the prestige of her name, Babies - Just Babies ceased publication.

A more impressive publication, the Woman's Home Companion, signed her in the spring of 1933, to do a monthly column, "I Want You to Write Me." Her contract called for her to receive $1,000, and her daughter, Anna $325 per month for handling letters addressed to Mrs. Roosevelt in care of the magazine.[23/] News of the financial arrangement was leaked to the New York Herald-Tribune, possibly by Mrs. Roosevelt herself.[24/]

Soon letters criticizing Mrs. Roosevelt for capitalizing on her name arrived at the Companion. The editor, Gertrude B. Lane, advised Mrs. Roosevelt reply by maintaining the modern role of a President's wife was to maintain contact "between the White House and the public."[25] Lane also suggested Mrs. Roosevelt back a proposed constitutional amendment outlawing child labor in the first article.[26] While Mrs. Roosevelt agreed to favor the amendment, she did not follow Lane's direction in responding to criticism of commercializing her position.

She wrote a Writer's Digest staff member who inquired into the issue: "I do not like to think that my name is entirely responsible for my receiving these offers, although I realize it must be a part of it, as I cannot very well divorce myself from my name. I honestly try to do every job to the best of my ability."[27] Obviously she wanted to establish herself as an independent writer, not just her husband's mouthpiece or a tool for editors. She rejected additions to the Companion article announcing her column from a staff member "who felt that this was exactly what you would have said."[28]

Not surprisingly Mrs. Roosevelt's advice to readers

was not solely apolitical, particularly since many corresponded with distressing tales of economic hardship. Responding to her personal appeal to "write me," readers beseiged her for help of all kinds. She replied occasionally by offering small amounts of money; other times by transmitting letters to federal agencies, which in turn passed them on to local relief boards.[29] In 1935 the Companion dropped the column with the apparent pretense that "two years was about as long a time as we should continue a special feature of this type."[30] A more logical explanation would be approach of the election year of 1936, and the magazine's desire not to appear to be endorsing the administration.

The Companion column addressed noncontroversial subjects related to women's roles, education and youth, (for example the need for young people to have privacy). Mrs. Roosevelt did not limit her writing to it. Seeking advice on improving her style she consulted her intimate friend, Lorena A. Hickok, a former Associated Press reporter. Writing Hickok in the fall of 1934, she noted, "I am terribly grateful for all the work you did on that article" (a reference to a piece on illiteracy which apparently was not published).[31] Fighting off one of her recuring

depressions, Mrs. Roosevelt told Hickok, "I will try, dear, to do better work as long as it matters to you."[32]

Mrs. Roosevelt's pleas for Hickok's assistance increased after she acquired George T. Bye, a well-regarded figure in New York literary circles, as her agent in the summer of 1935. Bye pressed to place her pieces in the Saturday Evening Post, then one of the biggest and best-paying mass circulation periodicals. Mrs. Roosevelt submitted her first article, "In Defense of Curiosity," telling Bye she hoped "they will like it & that it will not shock them too much so that they will not be willing to continue with me."[33] Her aim, she informed Bye, was to place one article a month for $2,500, an ambition not easy to carry out.[34]

Scouting for ideas which might interest editors, Bye proposed several possibilities: Skills involved in giving parties, the costs of public education, the art of courtesy.[35] Mrs. Roosevelt ruled out more controversial topics. "I am very sorry that I cannot write on birth control as long as my husband is President because I feel that as long as it offends the religious belief of a large group of citizens, I have no right to express my own opinion publicly," she wrote Bye.[36] An article on divorce would be "unwise" too, she said, because of the divorces of her children.[37]

When the Saturday Evening Post returned her second submission, Mrs. Roosevelt turned to Hickok for "detailed criticism," telling her the Post editor, George H. Lorimer, "doesn't like it though he says it's because I've written things like it before."[38] She told Hickok:

> ...you need not have been afraid that your or their (the magazine's) criticism would discourage me. You see, I haven't the feeling that things are good in themselves. I've always felt it was largely name and I'm glad to have it back because it shows they are wanting something besides name. If I can't do something else that is all and one can only find out by trying.[39]

So Eleanor Roosevelt insisted on trying to master the magazine-writing craft, even though she had passed her 50th birthday, was First Lady and had attained more prominence than any other woman of her day. To the question "Why?" there is no easy answer except her apparent need to prove herself capable of achievement on her own symbolized by receiving payment for her work. Showing her lack of training in writing, she accepted Hickok's criticisms gracefully: "I think I know what you mean about structure," she wrote naively.[40] "It (structural defect) comes from not thinking through from the start and building up step by step and I think I can do that better."[41]

One article on which she sought advice revolved on the question, "Can A Woman Be Elected President of the United States?" Her answer, which appeared as her husband was preparing to seek his second term, was negative - A woman would not be elected in the foreseeable future. "The feminists will be down on me and a lot of people will say it is camouflaged political partisan material and in a way it is!" she told Hickok.[42] Her closest friends did not approve of it, she noted: "Marion [Dickerman] felt I wasn't fair in saying women were not as interested in public affairs as men. She thinks even the average woman is and I tell her it is the exception!"[43] Before Hickok's comments arrive, however, Mrs. Roosevelt had to send the article on to meet a deadline at Cosmopolitan, which published the piece in October, 1935.[44]

Perhaps Mrs. Roosevelt believed herself well-qualified to address the issue, since she had been facetiously mentioned as a Presidential candidate in at least one newspaper.[45] She thought the idea ridiculous. In the article she deplored women's taking positions "before they are prepared to fill them."[46] Reviewing the Presidents since George Washington, she held men were better trained "by custom and experience" for the office.[47] "A vast majority of women have not as

yet attained the power to be objective about their work, and impersonal in their business contact," she said.[48] It was a veiled reference to the stereotype of women as emotional, rather than rational, creatures.

Trying to sell to major publications, Mrs. Roosevelt met rebuffs. She gave up on attempts to sell to the Saturday Evening Post, returning a revamped article to Bye doubting "if Mr. Lorimer will take it under any circumstances."[49] Her secretary, Malvina Thompson, advised Bye to forget about trying to place an article by Mrs. Roosevelt on education in Harper's magazine, stating: ...last year I saw a letter from the editor...saying he would be glad to take anything from her if it were not complimentary to the administration but that they could not take anything which was favorable."[50] Thus as a President's wife, Mrs. Roosevelt had a peculiar set of limitations on her ability to write freely.

Although an article titled "Teachers," ended up in the Harvard Educational Review, she found her most receptive market in women's magazines for at least two reasons. Her opinions, usually conventional, fit the magazines' ideology of identifying women primarily as wives and mothers. Also her name automatically attracted readers

eager for any glimpse she might provide of her husband and life in the White House. Mrs. Roosevelt obliged, referring to her family often in dealing with bland topics like holiday observances. Even the liberal social causes she promoted, like the controversial Arthurdale project to resettle unemployed West Virginia miners, did not fall outside the domain of philanthropic activity considered appropriate for upper-class wives.

Opponents of the Roosevelt administration attacked Mrs. Roosevelt's right to earn money by trading on her position. Her earnings from her writing were not publicized, although Ruby Black, a personal friend and United Press correspondent, reported the First Lady received $15,000 in 1934 from the Woman's Home Companion alone.[51] Mrs. Roosevelt never accounted publicly for her entire income and expenditures, although she conveyed the impression, in part through Black and other newspaper woman, that she gave all the proceeds to charity.[52] When questioned at a press conference, she hedged her answers, admitting this was not entirely true.[53] Far from causing a public outcry, however, Mrs. Roosevelt's insistence on a career won applause from a sizable portion of the press and public. The popular syndicated columnist, Heywood Broun, compared her to Nora,

the heroine of Ibsen's "A Doll's House," who sought to be a human being rather than a plastic creation of her husband.54/

In her zeal to establish independence, Mrs. Roosevelt closed her eyes to a connection between her position as the President's wife and the saleability of her literary products. When Bye sold her autobiography, This is My Story, to the Ladies' Home Journal for $75,000, a whopping sum for 1936, Mrs. Roosevelt was overjoyed at receiving a payment equal to her husband's annual salary as President. "I can't tell you how happy this makes me, to receive all this attention for something I have done by myself and not because of Franklin," she told the Journal editors at a party to launch publication of the serialized book in April, 1937.55/ Readers loved the story, sweeping the magazine off the stands and rejuvenating the Journal's faltering circulation.56/ So did critics, who acclaimed the autobiography for frankness, charm and literary style. Writing of her "poor little rich girl" childhood, Mrs. Roosevelt told the tale of a shy young woman who surmounted personal travail and metamorphosed into fame without losing the traditional virtues associated with womanhood. The New York Herald-Tribune called it a story of "a great

lady in a democracy."[57]

On one point the autobiography remained silent - the personal relationship of Mrs. Roosevelt and her husband. She described the early stages, "when she first met him, how happy she was when he...asked her to be his wife, and all that,' recalled Bruce Gould, Journal editor in an oral history interview.[58]

> Then suddenly, like an iron gate clanging shut, there was no more about them personally. This struck me as odd. I was not then in possession of the information... that they were really not living together. And that's the reason she, being a lady, simply didn't want to say, aye, yes, or no about it.[59]

In writing the autobiography, Mrs. Roosevelt stated her aims were twofold: "To picture the world in which I grew up and which seems to me today to be changed in many ways," and "to give us truthful a picture as possible of a human being."[60] Yet she never lost sight of contemporary political realities. After showing the manuscript to her husband, she altered a portion to use his own account of why he had not gone into uniformed military service during World War I.[61] She also deleted mention of his delirium at the outset of polio, as well as a passing reference to infidelity in connection with her brother's divorce.[62]

Thus she consciously strove to create an account that offered no fresh ammunition for political enemies.

This remained true of her other magazine ventures. "Cherry Blossom Time in Washington," which Bye succeeded in placing in the Reader's Digest in 1938, typified her usual product. "The cherry trees are in blossom!" it began with the breathless naivete that often marked her work.[63] "I think perhaps they are most beautiful by moonlight. I still catch my breath when I see them."[64]

As her agent Bye worked diligently to convince editors Mrs. Roosevelt was a professional writer who merited substantial payment. When she gave an article on "Christmas Reading at the White House" to a struggling little magazine called Driftwood published near the Roosevelt home at Hyde Park, New York, Bye asked the editor to let him see the piece. He noted acidly: "...some of the editors who are paying Mrs. Roosevelt high prices, might think that the public would be of the opinion that it was no great novelty to get an article by Mrs. Roosevelt since she even wrote for non-paying magazines."[65] The incident was turned into favorable publicity for both Mrs. Roosevelt and the magazine by release of the article to the Associated Press.[66] In contacts with editors, Bye tried to make sure Mrs. Roosevelt

received at least a dollar a word. When Better Homes & Gardens asked her to do a series linking the value of family life to improved housing, Bye sought specifics about the proposed rate of pay. He informed the editor, "We have to protect the magazines that pay Mrs. Roosevelt's dollar-a-word rate as much as possible (although) she usually generously delivers more words than are ordered."[67]

In the years before World War II, Mrs. Roosevelt's by-line appeared in a wide spectrum of publications. Collier's ran a piece on the 'Fun of Flying."[68] In Cosmopolitan she advocated improved opportunities for rural youth.[69] She urged women readers of This Week magazine to crusade against crime.[70] In Look she offered inspiration to both sexes in an article titled "Conquer Fear and You Will Enjoy Living."[71] In Woman's Day, writing on the subject "Men Have to Be Humored," she painted women as the world's peace-makers and the stronger of the sexes.[72] As she put it: "From the time they are little girls, they have to learn self-discipline because they have to please the gentlemen. They have to manage some man all their lives."[73] Then she quoted a passage from Stephen Vincent Benet's poem, "John Brown's Body," which depicted a Southern lady: "May Lou Wingate, as slightly made/And as hard to break as a rapier-blade."[74]

While Mrs. Roosevelt, who stood five feet, 11 inches tall and weighed 160 pounds, could scarcely be called "slightly made," she conveyed the impression she followed the Wingate mode. Did she manage her own husband through feminine wiles? Readers easily could draw that inference. She presented herself through her magazine work as first and foremost a wife.

Sometimes her articles contained outright political messages. In Liberty in 1939 she told "Why I Am Against the People's Vote on War," an attack on an unsuccessful attempt to secure passage of a Constitutional amendment for a national referendum on a declaration of war.[75] The amendment was opposed by President Roosevelt because it would cripple executive power.

When she herself was accused of softness toward Communists because of her involvement in the Red-tinged American Youth Congress, she defended herself in an article published in the Virginia Quarterly Review.[76] Referring to her uncle, Theodore Roosevelt, on the need for moral courage, she maintained being afraid of communism was no excuse not to listen to youth, even "when it belongs to the Communist party."[77] While the public might not accept that explanation from a male politician, it viewed Mrs.

Roosevelt differently. She was seen fundamentally as a motherly figure with a heart of gold. As Collier's, the voice of mainstream America, put it, "Even when she goes off the deep end for some completely discredited mob such as the Communists in the American Youth Congress, nobody that we know of seriously complains. It is understood as being just Mrs. Roosevelt's way."78/

Yet, even as she benefitted from her status as a President's wife, Mrs. Roosevelt expressed determination to make it on her own as a magazine journalist. She adamantly avoided ghost writers because she wanted to perfect her own style. "(Mrs. Roosevelt) repeated that since she is making writing a career, no one is going to have anything to do with her writing but herself," Bye declared in response to a proposal that she do articles in an interview or "as told to" form.79/

During World War II Mrs. Roosevelt's magazine work centered on patriotic themes. At first controversy emerged over Mrs. Roosevelt's ideas on the proper place for women in the war effort. In 1941 she inaugurated a question-and-answer column, "If You Ask Me," in the monthly Ladies'Home Journal, by proposing young women be drafted for compulsory government service.80/ The startling

suggestion drew attention to the column that mainly dealt with etiquette and advice to parents. Her proposal came in response to a question from a 19-year-old woman who wrote, "My young man has just gone to camp, and it doesn't seem right for me to sit at home and go around doing the same things I have always done."[81/] The Journal co-editor, Beatrice Gould, thought the proposal "a fine thing," but Time magazine commented, "no one in the government, from the President down, supported her."[82/] For the time, the plan was viewed as too radical, removing women from their protected, subordinate status.

Mrs. Roosevelt's subsequent war-time pieces simply urged women to work hard and do what they could for the war effort in the hope that a better world would emerge with the onset of peace. As a fixture of the Ladies' Home Journal during this period, she reported on her travels throughout the world to witness the role of women during war-time and to visit American servicemen.[83/] The conclusion of a 1944 Reader's Digest article titled "American Women in the War," stated Mrs. Roosevelt's position - that women are "only content as they feel they are contributing something toward the speedier ending of the war and a better chance for their particular men in the

world of the future."[84] She offered the faint hope of more postwar equality for women, noting in a subsequent Reader's Digest piece, "Men are now giving up, though rather reluctantly, their ancient prerogatives of deciding, without feminine assistance, the great questions of public policy."[85]

Just as she counseled women to be auxiliaries to men, she urged Black Americans to put the war effort above their own demands for equality. In an article called "If I Were Colored" for the Negro Digest in 1943, she called on Blacks to prove themselves worthy of full citizenship and not to let segregation destroy their own sense of self-worth.[86] "I would know that I had to work hard and to go on accomplishing the best that was possible under present conditions," she wrote.[87] "I would be proud of those of my race who are gradually fighting to the top in whatever they are engaged."[88] It is a measure of the prejudice of the times that her willingness to speak up for Blacks in even these moderate terms made her a heroine to the Black press.[89]

Although Mrs. Roosevelt continued to write for magazines after she left the White House in April, 1945, following Franklin D. Roosevelt's unexpected death, analysis of her work after she no longer was First Lady lies outside the

scope of this paper. To arrive at a conclusion regarding her magazine publications while she was First Lady requires understanding of the role of women in general during the Depression and World War II periods. Viewed from today's perspective, Mrs. Roosevelt's career was based more on her status than on the substance of her output. There was no doubt of its political dimension - when not actually engaging in political advocacy, she served an important political function by humanizing her husband's administration through use of human interest material and vignettes. As a role model for women in general, she upheld a conservative stance by today's standards. Her message to women: Essentially to define themselves in terms of their families. Although she urged them to embark on activities outside the home, she argued women's mission was to improve society so the sanctity of the individual home would be preserved.

Yet through her magazine career and other activities, Mrs. Roosevelt did serve as a liberating force for women. Through her example, she upheld the right of married women to engage in paid work - then a hotly debated issue. She also popularized the right of women to comment on current affairs and to maintain public profiles in contrast to the

Victorian ideology that upper-class women should remain apart from public life. While she did not advocate women's liberation, she helped pave the way for it. Therefore, her magazine career while she was First Lady can be seen as a halting step forward for women on the road to equality.

Notes

[1]See entries under Anna Eleanor Roosevelt, Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature. Vols. 9-15. See also "List of Periodical Articles by Eleanor Roosevelt, 1923-1971," compiled by staff of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, N.Y., hereafter referred to as FDRL, rev. 1979.

[2]James R. Kearney, Anna Eleanor Roosevelt: Evolution of a Reformer (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1968), pp. 5-6.

[3]Eleanor Roosevelt, "American Peace Award," Ladies' Home Journal Oct. 1923, p. 54.

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